A Mountain Missionary.

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CHAPTER I.

WHY HE WENT TO KENTUCKY.

Mr. Robert Peters, or Father Peters, as he was called by the mountaineers, was born in Ohio. He was a Campbellite clergyman, and ten years before the war he, with his wife and daughter, moved into the Cumberland mountains in southeastern Kentucky. Only an intense religious spirit could have induced Father Peters to leave his home in the rich lands of the western reserve and to take up his abode among the hills of the Cumberland range. It would be difficult in the United States to find a place and a people in more violent contrast with his old associates. Wealth, or at least comfort, and intelligence were the rule in northern Ohio. There was hardly an exception to poverty and ignorance in the new home.

But Father Peters, without giving a thought to the sacrifice he was making, felt that he was coming as a missionary to the heathen quite as much as if he had gone out to the heart of darkest Africa. He built a large double log cabin that was quite palatial and a model of home comfort in contrast with the cabins of his neighbors, and as he knew that the people were too poor to contribute to his support he broke up a little farm and astonished his neighbors by introducing agricultural appliances and methods such as they had never before heard of or dreamed of.

Soon after his arrival, and with no assistance from those whom he had come to benefit, Father Peters built a log meeting house across the rough mountain road from his home and sent word through the hills that hereafter there would be preaching every Sunday morning at Bradley's Crossing, as the place was called.

At first the people did not take kindly to the missionary. These mountaineers, while hospitable to passing strangers, do not favor the coming in of outsiders. The man who may not own an acre of rocky hillside is strong in the belief that the mountains round about are the exclusive property of himself and his kin. Then, again, while there were no slaves in this part of Kentucky, the people had a bitter hatred of abolitionists—a hatred that grew more intense as the day of strife approached. They believed that every northern man was an abolitionist, and at first they were inclined to think that Father Peters had come into the mountains to spread his pernicious political principles rather than to preach the gospel.

Although young enough to be her husband's daughter, Mrs. Peters threw herself heart and soul into his work. She was a woman of much culture and force of character, and before she had been a year in the mountains she established a school in the meeting house. Excepting Bradley, the blacksmith's, and the children of a family named Burns, that lived near by, the school was not attended. Neither the mountaineers nor their fathers had had any "book l'arnin," and so they reasoned that their children could get along without it, and then they had a dim notion that schools and abolition were closely related.

Gradually the meeting house became a rendezvous for the mountaineers for ten miles round. It was particularly popular in the summer season. Then groups of lank men and women, often accompanied by troops of ragged, tow-headed children, would come down the mountain trails every Sunday morning. The women, for comfort rather than economy, would carry their rough shoes in their hands and wash their feet and put on their foot covering by the little stream that brawled behind the meeting house. The men often carried their rifles with them to church, and it was the exception to find one who had not a pistol strapped about his waist. It was not unusual for the young men to indulge in target practice while the seniors were listening to Father Peters' sermon, and more than once the services were suddenly ended by a fight between two men who had met by appointment for that purpose.

But Father Peters' farm, quite as much as his preaching, helped to break up the stupid monotony of the mountaineers' methods. Heretofore they never dreamed that anything but potatoes, oats and corn could be raised in the hills. But gradually the preacher's young orchard of apples, plums, pears and peaches began to bear, and his vegetable garden was at once a revelation and a show of which the congregation never wearied on Sunday.

During the ten years that Father Peters preached and Mrs. Peters taught they never received one dollar from the people. The subject of compensation was never even hinted at, nor did the idea of a donation party ever enter their dull minds. Indeed they felt that they had a claim on the proceeds of the clergyman's labor, for they helped themselves from his orchard and garden without permission in advance or thanks afterward.

So matters went on till the fall of 1861. Although his ministrations had not been as successful as he at first expected, yet Father Peters was comforted with the belief that he had done some good for these rude people. He certainly suffered no pricks of conscience from a sense of neglected duty. Since his coming his daughter Ella had grown to be a beautiful young woman. His life focused in her, and in regarding her he forgot that the heavy hand of time was bowing his own shoulders and bleaching his hair like snow.

Bradley, the blacksmith, who was Mr. Peters' nearest neighbor, was a man of unusual physical strength, and before the coming of the preacher he had been noted as a fighter. Indeed he was credited with having killed more than one man. He had been shockingly brutal and profane and was known far and near as strong Dick Bradley to distinguish him from a cousin of the same name, who was not quite so strong. If the only good done by the clergyman had been the conversion of the blacksmith, his work in the mountains might well be considered a success. Bradley no longer swore nor drank, nor had he had a fight for years. This remarkable change, added to the fact that he was a man of few words, gave the impression to many that "religion had took all the pluck and snap out of strong Dick Bradley."

As the men in the hills all voted the Democratic ticket, the most exciting elections never created a ruffle among them, but as soon as it became known that the southern states had seceded and that war had come the stagnation was broken up, and the mountaineers evinced for the first time in their lives an awful anxiety to learn what was going on in the outside world. Bradley's blacksmith shop became a headquarters at which the war was discussed and men speculated as to the time when the strife would come to the hills, for they knew it must come as the only relief to the strain between the Union and disunion elements.

I have tried to point out in the course of these sketches that a majority of southern mountaineers were Union men, yet there were places where, without any apparent reason, the secession element largely predominated. This was certainly the case in Father Peters' neighborhood. As in most places, the secessionists were here the loudest in their abuse and the most eager for the war.

The old clergyman noted with alarm the change that had come over his congregation. As he was a northern man, they took it for granted, and they were right in the surmise that he was devoted to the Union. But, knowing that a loud protestation of his loyalty could do no good and might do a great deal of harm, he kept his views to himself and by every means in his power tried to pour oil on the troubled waters.

But when everybody else was so outspoken the reticence of Father Peters told against him, and the stories of his being an abolitionist which were so rife on his first coming were again revived, and this time with more bitterness, for the people believed the charge was true.

One night as Father Peters was reading in the little log annex he had built for a study the door opened without any preliminary knock, and strong Dick Bradley came softly in, and with an air of great mystery noiselessly closed the door behind him.

"I am glad to see you, Brother Bradley," said the clergyman. "Sit down and tell me the news, for you are in a position to learn what is going on hereabout."

The blacksmith pulled his chair nearer, and with his big hands to the sides of his mouth to shield his voice he whispered:

"I'm sorry to tell yo', Father Peters, that there's trouble a-brewin harabout, and lots of hit."

"Trouble to whom, Brother Bradley?"

"Can't yo' guess?"

"I cannot."

"Waal, hit's to yo' and yours," said the blacksmith, with an emphatic shake of the head.

"But surely no one could wish to annoy me. I did not think I had an enemy in the world," said the alarmed clergyman.

"That's jest hit," responded Bradley. "Thar hain't no one ez doesn't allow yer the best preacher in the mountains, but the boys say they don't like yer politics, and so they'll make trouble."

Father Peters protested that he had not meddled in politics, and that since the breaking out of the war a few months before he had guarded his words that he might not give offense.

"That's hit. That's why they've got so doggone sospichis. Now, Father Peters, yo' know I've ailus been a good friend of yer's, ez I should be a blamed dog not to be, seeing that you took me by the hand and led me up to the light, bless the Lor! But thar's dainjah all about we uns, mos' powaphul dainjah, ez me and the wife allowed this night. And we said that of so be yo' could go no'th fo' awhile till the trouble kinder blows ovah that hit'd be bettah fo' yo' and fo' yer friends."

More than once Father Peters and his wife and daughter had discussed this very question, but the old man's strong sense of duty and his innate courage led him to draw back from the serious consideration of a course that meant the abandonment of his missionary work, for he knew that if he left in the circumstances he could never return with the hope of being useful. He pointed out these arguments to Bradley and added:

"If I were to fly north with my family at this time, I have no assurance that they would let me depart in peace. It is not six weeks since a teacher named White who was trying to make his way from Tennessee to Portsmouth, O., was murdered in these hills, and his body might be bleached up the mountain if you and I had not carried it down and given it Christian burial behind the meeting house."

"That's a fac', Father Peters, and hit was jest coz we uns buried that thar pore feller Christian ez we did that made some of the folks so doggone mad and sespichis. Of course they know I'm a Union man cl'ar through and through, but they remembahs the time whin I wasn't a Christian fo' shucks and could lay out a regement of 'em two at a time. They kinder s'pects, and mebbe they're not so far outen the way, that thar's a right smart of the old Adam about me yit. Now, ef yo' think that the good Lor would ruther yo'd stay right har and do yer plum', squar' jooty, I reckon yo'll find me on his side and yo'rn, let the wind blow high or the wind blow low. And, bless the God of Israel, Father Peters, thar's my hand on hit!"

The two men shook hands, and then they knelt down, and, to use Bradley's expression, "wrastled powahfully with the Lor in prayah."

This conversation was had on Friday, and the following Sunday being a pleasant Indian summer day the people began to swarm down from the hills earlier than usual, and the old clergyman noted with pain that nearly all the men carried their rifles, a habit that he had induced them to give up for some years before the war.

Heretofore these people, for whom he had toiled so long and so hard without any compensation, always saluted him with a boisterous heartiness, but this morning they met Father Peters' salutations with curt nods and clouded brows. Even the Union men held aloof, for they were in the minority and knew that the slightest indiscreet act might precipitate the trouble which was prophesied every day and expected at any moment.

Het Magoone was at meeting this morning. He was a great, hulking, brutal desperado. He had killed a number of men, and the more peaceful stood in awe of him, for at the best of times law was only a name in the mountains, but at this time it had not even a shadow of existence.

Het Magoone was the leader of the desperate element that had come to the conclusion that Father Peters was a

They wrestled powerfully in prayer.

black abolitionist, and as this, to their brutal and ignorant minds, was the greatest crime of which any man could be guilty they could not receive with respect the religious teachings of the old man. It was known that Het Magoone's hatred was due to the fact that Ella Peters had rejected his advances and that her father insisted that the ruffian should cease his visits. Despite the discouragement of these rebuffs the fellow would have kept on had not Strong Dick Bradley led him to one side one day and told him, with much of his old time vigor of speech, that if he did not keep away from Father Peters' house he, Dick Bradley, would consider it his duty to "lay him out," preliminary to which he would "break his neck like a pipe stem."

This particular Sunday morning Het Magoone swaggered about like a man who felt himself to be master of the situation and wanted others to acknowledge the fact. He stood in the meeting house door, and with much profanity shouted his salutations to the newcomers. When the clergyman and his wife approached, it was thought that Het Magoone would bar their entrance. This certainly was his purpose, as he afterward confessed, but the appearance of the blacksmith on the scene induced him to postpone action.

Father Peters walked back to the little platform at the farther end of the meeting house, and here, as was his custom, he knelt down for silent prayer, and a few of the congregation went through the form of following his example.

As but very few of the congregation could read, hymnbooks were not used. The clergyman read out a hymn two lines at a time, and the singing that followed, which Ella Peters and her mother tried to lead, was not a very high order of sacred music. Father Peters adjusted his glasses, cleared his throat and was about to announce the hymn when Het Magoone stood up near the door and called out:

"Hold on thar, Father Peters!"

"What is it?" asked the astonished pastor.

"Afoah yo' uns ken do any moah preachin in these yar hills we uns'd like fo' to know jist how yo' stand," and Het Magoone fondled his rifle as a mother fondles her child.

"This is certainly an extraordinary proceeding in the house of God," said the old man tremulously, but with dignity.

"So hit is," continued Het Magoone, "but these har is mos' stormy times, ez every one'll allow. Now, Father Peters, I want you to answer me some questions. Will yo' do hit?"

"Let me hear them."

"Hain't yo' a Yankee?" this with a wink to his friends.

"I was born north of the Ohio. If that makes me a Yankee," said the old man with spirit, "I suppose I am one."

"Waal, yo' couldn't 'a' denied hit without lyin. Now, some of we uns hez been talkin this ovah, and we allows that yo' kem down here ten year or so ago to play the spy."

"That is false," said the old man, his eyes aglow and his form trembling with excitement. "As God is my judge, I came here with my wife and little one that I might be the humble instrument of saving the people. What I ask you could I spy out that is not known"—

"We uns know that yer a black Republican!" shouted Het Magoone, and he added an oath that shocked even his associates.

"I am not a black Republican. It is perhaps unnecessary for me to say that neither in the last election nor indeed in any election within my memory has a Republican vote been cast in Laurel county, Ky."

It was the case of the wolf and the lamb over again. Het Magoone had come prepared to worry and humiliate Father Peters, and the fact that he had not the slightest ground for his attack did not change him from his purpose.

"Yo'd 'a' voted the Republican ticket ef yo'd had a chance," shouted Magoone. Then, with the manner of a man about to play a card that could not be beaten, he asked, "Hain't yo' fo' the Union?"

Without a moment's hesitation Father Peters responded:

"I am a citizen of Kentucky, and as Kentucky is still in the Union I must be a Union man."

"But ef so be Kentucky was to secede, would yo' be a Union man then?"

"God giving me strength, I would," was the fervent response.

"Thar! Didn't I tell yo' uns he was fo' the Union, and a man that's fo' the Union is a black Republican and a abolitionist," shouted Het Magoone.

"And I say that's a d——d lie!"

That there might be no mistake as to the man who had given expression to this forcible opinion strong Dick Bradley got up, and with his right hand thrown back under his coat, a gesture which even the children present understood, he walked over and stood beside the preacher.

The women became very nervous, and many of the men turned ashy pale and moved toward the door.

"Dick Bradley, this ain't no sarcus o' yourn," said Het Magoone, but his brutal bearing was toned down, and there was that in the eyes and movements of the thick lips that told he was not pleased with the bearing of the blacksmith. But, gaining confidence as he remembered that two-thirds of the 60 men present were his partisans, he continued: "We uns who's fo' the south ken wait to git even with yo' uns who's fo' the Union. Thar's plenty of time to settle them things, but what we want now is to git rid of a man f'om the no'th who comes down har ez a spy and purtendin that hit's God Almighty's religin. Father Peters, yo've preached yo'r last sarmint in these har hills."

"Who says so?" demanded Bradley.

"We uns."

"And who's yo' uns?"

"Me and my friends."

"Neither yo' nor yer friends owns a splinter of this house. From foundation log to clapboard hit's owned by the man ez built hit—the man ez kem down heah to lead us to do right—but thar's some men so give ovah to sin, Het Magoone among 'em, that they're bound to be damned, and I'm mighty glad of hit. Now, yo' uns that don't want to heah Father Peters preach is free to leave. But, by G—, the next man ez tries to break up our worship will find himself needin a hull new top to his head!"

Strong Dick Bradley, although using this strong language, appeared to be the coolest man in the meeting house, but there was no one within the hearing of his voice who did not know that he was making no idle threat. Motioning to his friends to follow him, Magoone strode out of the house, and a meeting was held at the door. The preacher and his followers were denounced in language of unquestionable vigor, every word of which could be heard inside, and men who had through years received favors at the old man's hands threatened that if he did not leave the mountains at once they would hang him.

But even those who remained back with Father Peters were in no mood for devotion. They saw that the dreaded time had come and that from this day on till the end the old friends, neighbors and kinsmen must stand face to face in a life and death struggle.

At Mrs. Peters' suggestion her husband's friends left the church and gathered in the study, but even here they could hear the shouting and the swearing, punctuated now and then by the startling discharge of pistols.

Following the old man's example, all who could crowd into the little room knelt down, and those who could not knelt within hearing outside. As Father Peters called on heaven for help and light, the men and women, with eyes closed and bodies swaying, wrought themselves up to a state of camp meeting excitement till at length the appeals of the preacher were drowned in shouts of "Halleluiah." "Glory to God," "Send down the light, O Mastah," "Amen and Amen" and "Heah the prayahs of sinners."

At last the fervor died out from exhaustion, though still the kneeling women sobbed and the men groaned. Father Peters had just risen to his feet when he heard a cry outside—a cry that was taken up by the men, women and children. All rushed out to see a black pillar of smoke shooting up from the meeting house. It had been fired by Het Magoone and his friends, who now danced about the burning building and fired off their pistols and howled like so many drunken savages.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST UNION LEAGUE.

The war had come to Bradley's Crossing. The little Salem meeting house in which the Union men under Father Peters had so often and so fervently prayed for peace was a smoldering ruin. The men who had burned it down were as savagely jubilant over their work as if they had won a great battle against great odds, and the Union men were correspondingly despondent.

Strong Dick Bradley and the men who had been converted in the little meeting house were startled at the destruction. They had come to speak of the place as "the house of God," and this meant to them not simply a place for worship, but a structure sanctified by the divine presence and under the divine care, and as such as safe against fire as the hills themselves.

"Why did God let the house burn?" "Why did he permit his people, and particularly so good a man as Father Peters, to be persecuted?" "Why did he not smite hip and thigh the profane wretches who had done this thing?"

These were the questions that puzzled the Union men who belonged to the church, and failing to receive a satisfactory answer the most soundly converted felt that he was falling from grace, and that if the Lord did not afford miraculous help at once he must sever the connection, for the time being at least, and try to help himself after the old mountain methods.

A habit supposed to be dead invariably asserts itself with greater force after it is resurrected. This was certainly the case with strong Dick Bradley, the blacksmith. He had been noted for his profanity among a people where even the children lisp in oaths. He had been famed as a fighter in a community where the ability to fight is regarded as the highest and noblest attribute of manhood, and where the desperado who has killed his man or men is envied as the wild Indians envy the warrior who has taken the most scalps.

It was generally believed that the blacksmith's religion, while making him a safer and so a more desirable neighbor, had entirely unmanned him, and that even so arrant a braggart as Het Magoone could safely treat him with contempt and set him at defiance. But strong Dick Bradley's religion, or at least that part of it that had curbed his tongue and his arm, went up and vanished in the smoke of the meeting house, and for four terrible years both had full swing.

While Bradley's religion had received so severe a check, the effect of this attack was to turn his earnest mission feelings into a blind fanaticism that was to find delight in conflagrations and a soothing comfort in blood. Father Peters, who had just been praying by the blacksmith's side, and now stood holding his arm while they watched the play of the flames destroying the mission, forgot his own danger and his own loss as he noted the old, black scowl on the face and the devilish light flashing up in the deep gray eyes of strong Dick Bradley.

"If Jesus Christ won't pertect the place we uns hez fixed up snug fo' him, that's his look out. Hit'll be a d——d long time afoah he hez another so good a show in these hills. But, by the great Eternal, the men ez hez did this'll have to pay the insurance in blood! Hold thar! Het Magoone, God cuss yo' fo' a dog and a coward! I've got somethin to say afoah yo' uns ride off!"

The last sentence was addressed to Het Magoone, who was now about to mount the horse on which he had come.

The people who had been praying and the people who had been shouting about the fire and Het Magoone himself were startled by the blacksmith's voice and manner. All saw that the Christian blacksmith had gone, and that the strong and savage Dick Bradley of a few years before had come back. Magoone obeyed the summons, for he knew, as did all his supporters, that the first sign of disobedience would have been the signal for a bullet in his heart.

Het Magoone had 40 men with him. All were armed with rifles and pistols. The very fact that they carried these weapons showed that they were prepared for a fight and expected one. Physically it is safe to say there was not a downright coward in the lot. Well led, there was not a man of them, not even the brutal, swaggering Het Magoone, who could not have been held in line against overwhelming numbers till the last one fell in his tracks, and who could not have been carried on in an assault, though certain that not one could return, but at sight of strong Dick Bradley, and at the sound of his voice, the strongest trembled and became, for the time, more obedient than if not so weak as a child.

Ignoring the fact, if indeed he was aware of it, that Father Peters was clinging to his arm, the blacksmith strode right through the crowd about the church until he stood face to face with Het Magoone. The clergyman's daughter, to whom I am indebted for an account of what preceded this and what is to follow, followed her father, fearing for his safety. Although as true and brave a woman as ever lived and quite as self possessed as if she had spent all her life in the best society, Ella Peters was paralyzed with alarm when she saw the change that had come over the man who hitherto had been more gentle than a girl to her and hers.

"Het Magoone, yo' kem har today to raise h—l! Don't lie, yo' dog, and say yo' didn't! Waal, yo've riz hit, and now, by the great Eternal, I'll send yo' thar!"

The blacksmith raised his arm, and giant though Magoone was he towered over him. The horse kept the now cowed desperado from retreating, and he did not dare to touch his rifle or one of the many pistols bolted to his waist.

At this juncture Father Peters threw himself between the two men. His hat was off, and the wind blew his white hair about his bare, thin face. He was the one man who did not fear strong Dick—mad Dick Bradley.

"In God's name, Brother Bradley! In God's name, have patience! Oh, my prayers and my lessons my son, have you forgotten them? Wait! Wait! Prayers and patience! Prayers and patience!" and he threw his thin arms about the raised arm of the giant and it fell—with a sob.

"I've obeyed yo' too long," groaned the blacksmith, "to brak' off all a-suddentlike. But, Father Peters, yo' mout's well have let me did today what I'll be 'bleeged fo' to do tomorrer or next day." Then, addressing Magoone:

"Het, way back when me and yo' wuz boys, yer father sneaked upon my father, way down at London, and kilt him. Hit was a coward's deed, and I 'lowed when yo' and me growed up I'd have blood for blood, and yo' knowed hit, too, for you kep' outer my way and went to live down Tennessee way. Then Father Peters kim, and I got right smart of religin, and yo' felt hit safe to come back and hit wuz safe, so long's the religin lasted.

"But she's gone, gone a-flickerin in that fiah yo' uns made today. Father Peters staid my ahm today, not on account of religin, but coz I love him, and I'm a-goin to stand by him, and, by the great Eternal, I want yo' uns fah and neah to know hit! Go yer way with yer people and make ready. I'll stay back har with my kin and friends and prepah. And bear in mind, Het Magoone, when we uns meet agin, thar'll be blood, and I won't ax God to have mercy on the dead. Now go, d—n yo'!"

The desperado swung into the saddle, and then his followers sent up a gasp of relief. Not at all ashamed of their work, but with their feelings against Father Peter somewhat allayed, Magoone and his gang, on foot and on horseback, started into the hills.

Then the old clergyman assembled his friends before the ruin and addressed them. He counseled patience and peace. He implored them to avoid gatherings and not to talk, even with those they were sure of, on the subject now exciting the land. This done, he called on all to kneel and to join with him in prayer, and all did so excepting the blacksmith, who, with folded arms, watched the blue smoke pillar rising from the ruin.

"Brother Bradley," said the old clergyman when he had concluded, "will you lead us in prayer?"

Strong in everything he did, the blacksmith, during his years of grace, had developed a decided talent for prayer. There were a force and a rude eloquence about the man very effective with people of impressionable natures.

"Father Peters," he replied, "I can't pray. Hit don't seem jist the thing fo' me to pray to Jesus Christ when he stands by and sees a lot of cussed rebils burn down the house we uns built fo' him. He had the powah to strike 'em dead like lightnin, but did he do hit? Not much. Thar's a heap of coals and ash whar the church was, and thar's that d——d Het Magoone off safe with his gang, whin I should a smashed in his skull like the shell of a bird egg and then flung him into the fiah."

Father Peters tried to reason with his friend. He repeated all the wise and trite things about the mysterious ways of Providence, the power of prayer, the necessity of keeping alive the faith, and the certainty that truth would triumph; but, while still loving and respecting the noble old man, the blacksmith was in no mood to be comforted by words. In effect he replied in this way, and on the men it was evident that his words had a stronger influence than the prayers and exhortations of Father Peters:

"I've got so that I can spell out a few words in the good book, but my youngest boy's got moah downright l'arnin, fo' he's readin jography. Still I can think, and I do think right smart, and har's what I've been a-thinkin this blessed day, and I say hit without meanin no disrespect fo' Father Peters nor his kin, fo' I love 'em all, God bless 'em!

"But, after long months of waitin and prayin, the wah, ez we uns tried to pray off, hez come to the Cumberland hills, and hit do look powahful like to me ez ef she'd come fo' a mighty long visit. Wah means fightin and fiah and blood and death! Wah and religin can't nevah gee. Yo' can't yoke 'em. One pulls no'th, the other south. One means trustin in God, which is all mighty nice and comfortin in peace; the other means trustin to yerse'f and yer rifle, and that's the only thing to do in time of wah. I'll go home from har and mold bullets in the forge while the lead holds out, and I'll take the good book fo' waddin, to help kill the foes of the Lor, d—n 'em!

"Go to yer homes, folks, and think hit ovan. Tell yer wives and chillen, yo' uns ez kan tote rifles, that yo'll be 'bleeged to leave 'em mighty soon, fo' the ch'ice'll come to be shot down like dogs in these hills or to git together and fight our way to the old flag. The men that fired the meeting house today b'foah our eyes, tonight may burn our cabins ovah our heads. If so be they don't do hit, hit won't be coz they don't want to, but coz they're skeert. A man with a rifle will have moah powah to keep 'em low than fifty thousand million meetin houses full of folks a prayin.

"So that's why I think religin's all right in hits place, and hit may give a powah of comfort to the wimmin when we uns hez to light out, but ez fo' me I'm in fo' wah, and I feel that I'll be 'bleeged to give my religin a rest till we decide with our rifles whether a lot of d——d ribils or we Union men is a-gwine to hev the free run of the hills along the Cumberland. Thar, that's all I have to say, and hit's right smart moah than I 'tended to say when I sot out."

Father Peters saw that it would be folly to attempt to change the blacksmith or to try to hold to his own peaceful views the Union mountaineers that heard him. And then, as his daughter confessed in telling the story, he fully appreciated the force of the blacksmith's reasoning about the war, though the change in the man's religious views had on him a most discouraging effect.

Even the women and children present on this occasion seemed to realize that the war had come to the hills, but they made no outcry, gave no sign of nervousness. If anything indeed, they appeared to rejoice at the prospect of an excitement that would break in on the dull and brutalizing monotony of their lives.

Promising to keep to themselves and to come together at Bradley's Crossing when the danger became more threatening, the people went sadly to their cabins in the mountains, and that night the children greased patches, the women molded bullets, and, with the grim stolidity of Indians preparing for the warpath, the men made ready their arms. Father Peters went home with his wife and daughter with the feeling of a man who has tried to do his duty and will not be deterred by failure from continuance. He was at this time over 70 years of age, and although never physically vigorous he was active, and his mind was as clear and his hope as strong and his desire to save his fellow men as fervid as when he was 40. He did not come of a race that could be cowed or discouraged. He had the Puritanical temper that is slow to wrath unless that wrath is kindled by the divine spark, when it becomes a devouring fire for the glory of God.

After supper that night the old man said to his wife and daughter:

"I have been praying for the light,